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SUBJECT: REGIONAL PROGRESS ON COMMIT PROCESS

¶1. SUMMARY: The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) held the Fourth Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM 4) on human trafficking in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on May 10-12, 2006. Over thirty senior government officials from the six Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Governments (Cambodia, China, Laos, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam) attended the meeting to review and assess the progress of cooperation on trafficking to realize a vision of a trafficking-free Mekong region. Each country briefed on its efforts in bilateral cooperation, development of legal frameworks, and implementation of other actions to eradicate trafficking in the region. The meeting closed with the group updating COMMIT's Sub-Regional Plan of Action to focus attention on the areas of law enforcement and criminal justice while maintaining focus on efforts on prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration of victims. END SUMMARY.

Country-by-Country Progress Report

¶12. Cambodia: The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) reported several achievements in bilateral cooperation as well as in several internal areas. The RGC reported signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking with both Thailand and Vietnam. Also reported was that the new anti-trafficking law was drafted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and forwarded to the Ministry of Justice to be reviewed and finalized; the law is expected to be sent to the Council of Ministers by the end of 2006. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY) is working on a National Child Protection Policy. The RGC presentation noted that the five-year National Plan of Action (NPA) against trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation would be finalized in 2006. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) reported its work with the International Office of Migration (IOM), supported by funding from USAID, and MOWA's collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement prevention programs in awareness-raising, economic development and legal protection of victims. The MOSAVY reported work with IOM to establish reintegration services for Cambodian victims of trafficking from Vietnam and Malaysia; development of a specialized police unit since 2002; and the training of senior anti-trafficking officials along with prosecutors, judges and students of the Royal School of Judges and Prosecutors.

¶13. China: Chinese delegates reported China's

participation in the first conference on "Against Human Trafficking between Myanmar and China," and on a campaign including both Chinese and Vietnamese police on cross-border trafficking of Vietnamese women. China's delegates also reported that transit centers for trafficked women and children have been established, including the first transit center for foreigners.

¶4. Laos: Laotian delegates reported that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand on cooperation to combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and has approved the Lao Women's Union (LWU) law-implementing decree on the "Protection and Development of Women" law. The report noted that dissemination workshops have been held countrywide by LWU to promote the Protection and Development of Women law. LWU has also officially opened a Counseling and Protection Center for victims. Laos reported on establishment of a special trafficking unit called the Lao anti-people trafficking unit (LAPTU), Child Protection Networks in five provinces and plans for a National Workshop in Human Trafficking and Labor Migration in Vientiane.

¶5. Burma: Burmese delegates reported the signing of a Regional Treaty on mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (Malaysia, January 2006) and reported strengthening of relationships with Thailand and China through multiple bilateral meetings. Other reported progress included enacting an Anti-Trafficking in Persons law, completion of national level workshops on the implementation, development, and distribution of a screening checklist for "victim identification," and

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related training in its use, and conducting four in-country workshops on Child Sex Tourism.

¶6. Thailand: Thai delegates reported signing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation of anti-trafficking of women and children with Cambodia and Laos, and noted that they are in the process of finalizing a MOU with Vietnam on elimination of trafficking in children and women and on the rescue of victims of trafficking. Also reported was: Thailand has signed a MOU on Employment Cooperation with Cambodia, Laos and Burma; Thailand's Cabinet has approved a national policy and plan on prevention, suppression and handling of trafficking in children and women in domestic and cross-border situations; the Thai government has passed a resolution and opened the region's first integrated anti-trafficking center; in December 2005, the Cabinet passed a resolution approving a special scheme for employment of illegal or undocumented migrant workers from Burma, Laos and Cambodia; the Thai government has established a one-stop service center to document and provide work permits for undocumented migrant workers from Burma, Lao and Cambodia. Also reported was that, while Thailand is currently using an existing law on prevention and suppression of trafficking in women and children to fight trafficking, the Cabinet has approved a new bill on prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons and the bill is now being considered by the Judicial Council. And finally, in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Thailand, and other agencies, Thailand is planning an international conference on trafficking in Greater Mekong Sub-region for 22-24 May 2006.

¶7. Vietnam: Vietnamese delegates reported signing of a Bilateral Cooperation Agreement with Cambodia, and that a Bilateral Agreement with Thailand on "Elimination Against Trafficking in Women and Children and Support for Victims" is being finalized. Delegates supported China's country report by noting that Vietnamese and

Chinese Ministries of Public Security carried out border province campaigns to rescue and return victims and apprehend traffickers. The Vietnam presentation also noted publication in September 2005 of a handbook to help prepare "intending migrant workers," and the development of standards and standard operating procedures for victim identification and for providing protection and support, especially in Vietnam-China and Vietnam-Cambodia border provinces.

Comment

18. The Secretariat for the COMMIT Process -- the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the GMS -- organized and funded the COMMIT SOM4 with Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs. The event gave governments and partners a chance to review priorities, demonstrate action taken, and revisit plans for activities in the coming year. The COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action hopes to set the standard for anti-trafficking work in the Asian region, including establishment of the legal framework to support anti-trafficking efforts. The hosting of the event in Cambodia helped Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs demonstrate its lead role in fighting trafficking. MOWA's Secretary of State chaired both the Cambodia COMMIT Task Force and the SOM4 Organizing Committee for this event. The event also drew attention to the challenges that Cambodia faces in developing and implementing a legal framework to combat anti-trafficking in humans. With the anti-trafficking law of Cambodia still in a draft and review stage, Cambodia is challenged to compete with neighboring countries that have already established anti-trafficking laws. End Comment.

STORELLA